

Schools dispute proposed quarry's traffic claims

By **JERRY END**
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NEW HANOVER - The latest concern by opponents of a proposed quarry off Route 73 is the potential clash of trucks with school buses.

The tedium of technical testimony was broken briefly Wednesday night when Boyertown Schools Superintendent Dr. Charles Amuso told a traffic expert that his description of afternoon "peak hours traffic" differed from the district's when two schools near a proposed quarry dismiss their students.

The educator referred specifically to the Boyertown Junior High East and from New Hanover-Frederick Schools.

About 120 people in the normally reserved audience laughed and applauded his comment. Following repeated testimony by the prospective quarry's traffic expert traffic engineer David Horner, he said his traffic impact study was conducted on Route 73 from 7 to 9 a.m. and 4 to 6 p.m. in a March midweek date. Amuso pointed out those school bus traffic peaks in the afternoons from about 2 to 3 p.m. along the same highway.

Amuso later said 22 school buses and vans take children home from Boyertown Junior High East and 15 from New Hanover-Frederick Schools during the after school hours. It is estimated that the number of children being transported is about 770 at the junior high school and 685 at the elementary school. Although figures on the numbers of private vehicles used to carry other children as well as schools staffs, Amuso said the staff at New Hanover totals 72 with 102 at the Junior High School.

Following nearly 3 1/2 hours testimony and questions from the audience, the zoning board shut down the hearing. The next sessions are tentatively scheduled for 7 p.m. on Wednesday July 25 and Thursday, Aug. 2, also in the auditorium at Boyertown Jr. High East. Because of a time conflict Horner was unable to start his testimony until more than an hour after the New Hanover zoning board's scheduled start. Township Solicitor Robert Brant told the board he was

concerned that interspersing other expert testimony in the appeal by Gibraltar Rock Inc. to develop a quarry could be confusing. The proposed site is located on 163 acres north of 73 between Church Road and Route 663.

Despite his concern, the zoners permitted Phoenixville-head-quartered environmental engineer Uday Patankar to testify about the rigid permit requirements imposed by federal and state environmental agencies for quarrying. His expertise from nearly 30 years working with engineering firms from south-east Pennsylvania was accepted by both the zoners and Brant.

Patankar also said he was a founding member of a regional roundtable sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) since the 1980s. In addition to some 30 quarries he has worked with during his career, he said he has provided 'pro bono' technical assistance to various environmental protection agencies.

After attorney Paul Logan of King of Prussia questioned Patankar about his credentials in seismology, acoustics, geo-physical and geological engineering, quarry lawyer told the zoners that experts in those fields would testify during the hearings. Patankar added that he gained his hydrological expertise "on the job."

Patankar then offered detailed testimony about the permitting process that requires quarry operators to eventually reclaim the site when the surface mining operation ends. He said the open pit would eventually become a water reservoir.

Gibraltar Rock already has a mining operators license issued by the state and an exploration waiver that allows it to do the necessary tests to locate the ores it intends to quarry.

Patankar explained that the five operating documents that would be sought include a surface mining permit; federal and state non-pollution permits and individual clean air permits for 'o the actual operations activities including (rock) crushing and black top Processing.

The environmental engineer also described the stringent requirements for rerouting streams, wetlands and assuring the quality of water when it leaves the Property.

Following a brief break Horner underwent scrutiny' from a number of resident, about his traffic studies.

Brant questioned Horner about his apparent failure to include the future traffic impact of a number of new subdivisions, including a 1,000-home senior citizens development plus the traffic generated by the Schools. The engineer pointed out that his studies were based on potential quarry traffic information provided by John Silvi one of the Proposed quarry's owners - and traffic patterns during the peak hours his firm studied actual traffic at the two intersections closest to the quarry's entrance.

Although Horner said there was "no way" he could verify Silvi's information, he affirmed that "the best source for traffic data (to and from the quarry site) was from the operator himself."

When Logan pressed for details about the types of trucks and materials being transported to the proposed quarry to process the raw materials, Horner repeated that his data was accurate about the numbers of vehicles that would operate daily, but that he was not qualified to break down their

The Silvi Group of Fairness Hills, Bucks County, purchased five properties for \$3.2 million in light and heavy industrial zoning districts to construct and operate a quarry, and operate an asphalt and concrete plant at the site. It is projected that the firm would produce and ship about 500 tons daily for an annual total of .5 million tons of materials annually. The firm operates a number of sand pits, but this would be its first hard rock quarry.

Many of the audience members at the hearing have organized into an opposition group that has placed newspaper ads and passed out flyers against the quarry. Anyone interested in joining the group can call 610-754-6841.